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Thursday, January 25 - Wednesday, January 31, 2018

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**Dance crews have all the moves to win competition**



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## 'Save our rink': Thousands support keeping arena open

### Petition calls for council to act

By Eva Astreinidou

MORE than 4,400 people in Basingstoke have signed a petition calling for action to be taken to save their ice rink.

Keen skaters and ice hockey players who use the facility are wondering why it was not included in £300million redevelopment plans in the town's leisure park unveiled earlier this month by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

The petition, which was reposted by ice hockey team Basingstoke Bison, claims that the present operator Planet Ice has indicated that it can only guarantee its use by the team until the end of the current season - the end of March - due to ongoing maintenance issues.

The petition calls for the council to act to help save the rink, widely known as Basingstoke Arena.

The petition reads: "In our opinion the council are partly responsible because they have failed to correctly monitor the condition of the building and to enforce any terms of the lease requiring the leasees to maintain the building to a good standard.

"There is an extremely diverse group of customers who use the facility and it provides sport and recreation for many clubs.

"For all too long the council has

ignored what the community demands and have stood idly watching the rink deteriorate. We say enough."

Commenting on the petition, Josanne Cannon said: "Don't turn Basingstoke into a ghost town. Keep the facilities open."

David Evans added: "Planet Ice has been an asset to the ice sports community for as long as I can remember. It would be entirely tragic for it to be lost from our town."

Borough council leader Councillor Clive Sanders said the council owns the land at the leisure park but it would be difficult for it to justify using public funds to repair the building as it is a private commercial business.

He added: "The £300million rejuvenation of the leisure park is an innovative and complex regeneration project.

"It will take some years before construction will be completed and of course it is subject to gaining planning permission.

"The detail of what new facilities will be included has yet to be decided and discussions with existing operators as well as public consultation on what residents want to see will be part of shaping the future provision."

Planet Ice were contacted for a comment.

To sign, visit [www.ipetitions.com/petition/keep-an-ice-rink-in-basingstoke](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/keep-an-ice-rink-in-basingstoke).

### Hair-raising way to raise cash for hospice



Wigs, beehives, hair dyed all colours of the rainbow - anything goes for Mad Hair day. Every year, St Michael's Hospice holds the annual event to encourage people to try out a new look while raising money for a good cause. The event returns to Basingstoke on February 9. See page 3 for more.

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# Man jailed for abusing children as a teenager

By Eva Astreinidou

A MAN who raped and abused children in Basingstoke when he was a teenager has been jailed for 17 years.

Daniel William Thomas, 45, of Lovetot Avenue, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, was found guilty of 10 charges following a trial at Sheffield Crown Court.

The charges related to offences against five victims that took place between 1987 and 1990 in Basingstoke.

The victims were aged between six and 13 and the charges included rape, indecent assault and gross indecency with a child.

The trial heard that Thomas targeted vulnerable children and that he, in certain cases, used weapons to threaten the children while he was raping and abusing them.

Judge Dixon said that Thomas had acted in a "predatory manner" to isolate his victims.

The judge also thanked the victims for their courage in coming forward and said that their bravery could not be "underestimated".

The offending came to light in



Daniel William Thomas, pictured in 1988, has been sentenced to 17 years for offences that took place between 1987 and 1990

2007, when one of the victims made a report to the police.

The subsequent investigation expanded to include a further two victims and Thomas was then charged with eight offences that concerned the initial three victims.

A further two victims then came forward after publicity surrounding

the charges and Thomas was then charged with a further two offences.

The judge sentenced Thomas to a total of 17 years in prison and placed him on the sex offenders' register for life.

After the trial, Detective Constable Craig Ferguson from Hampshire said: "This was a detailed investigation which spanned a decade of policing, and I would like to pay tribute to the victims in this case who have shown tremendous courage and resilience."

"As children, they suffered some of the worst crimes imaginable. Thomas used predatory methods to isolate young, vulnerable children, who he then forced himself upon. The offences were violent and extremely aggressive."

"After he had raped and abused these children Thomas threatened each of them warning that he would harm their families and they would be taken into care if they spoke out against him."

"We will support and help those people who find the strength to come forward irrespective of when these horrific crimes took place."

## InBrief

### Attackers jailed

TWO men from Basingstoke have been jailed after attacking a man and repeatedly shooting him with a BB gun.

George James, 23, of Gershwin Road, and Travis Taylor, 21, of Branton Close, both pleaded guilty to grievous bodily harm with intent and possession of an imitation firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence.



George James Travis Taylor

James was sentenced to 10 years in prison at Winchester Crown Court on January 19, followed by five years on licence for a dangerous offender.

Taylor was jailed for eight years. The sentencing comes after the attack on a 28-year-old man.

The victim was approached by the two offenders asking for a lift, which he declined, on Stag Hill on October 28, 2017.

He was shot repeatedly in the face, arm and back with a BB gun, leaving him with significant injuries that required surgery.

### Don't drive and text

FAMILIES who lost loved ones are urging people to be aware of the devastation that using a mobile phone while driving can cause.

Hampshire and Thames Valley's Joint Roads Policing Unit carried out the week-long campaign, with the aim of drawing attention to the risks of being distracted.

The two forces warn that drivers are four times more likely to crash if they are using a mobile phone while driving, and twice as likely to be involved in a fatal collision texting as you are drink drinking.

Road Safety Sergeant Chris Appleby said: "A moments inattention can be the difference between life and death. It's not worth the risk."

## £20m hotel 'important for future growth'

PLANS for a £20million hotel in Basingstoke's central business district are moving forward.

A planning application that includes 135 bedrooms, meeting and event facilities, an all-day restaurant, Starbucks, a pub and a business club and leisure facilities is now being considered for Basing View.

If granted permission by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, construction of the hotel could start this summer.

Councillor John Izett said: "This is

another important step in the regeneration of Basing View. Many employers, especially those on Basing View, have been encouraging the council to deliver a new business-class hotel in the centre of the town for their staff and clients."

"I am delighted that we are moving closer to providing this new facility which is important to the future growth and prosperity of our borough."

Plans for the business-class hotel were submitted by Village Hotels,

which owns 29 hotels across the UK.

The project will bring with it more than 130 construction jobs, a further 200 jobs in the construction supply chain, and in excess of 100 permanent jobs when it opens next year.

The council has sold a long lease to the company, so money generated from the project will help fund future development for the borough.

Head of property at Village Hotels Iain Stackhouse said: "[We are] excited about the opportunity of operating in Basingstoke."

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## Go mad with your hair to boost charity

A VARIETY of weird and wacky hair-styles will be on display for charity next month.

The annual St Michael's Hospice Mad Hair Day returns to Basingstoke and Deane on February 9.

An array of outrageous hair dos are expected to hit the area, with people of all ages being encouraged to wear crazy wigs and style their hair however they please all with the aim of generating money for the hospice.

Last year the event managed to raise more than £6,000 for the hospice in Aldermaston Road, with schools, hairdressers and residents all getting involved.

Lynne Grimshaw, community cam-



paigns co-ordinator at the hospice, said: "All the money raised from Mad Hair Day goes towards providing care and support through the hospice's in-patient unit, day service and hospice

at home services."

The running costs of the hospice last year were £3.7million of which only around 20 per cent is funded by the North Hampshire Clinical Com-

missioning Group with the remainder coming from other sources such as fundraising events. To get involved, call 01256 848845 or email lynne.grimshaw@stmichaels-hospice.org.uk.

## Have your say on school transport

By Eva Astreinidou

AROUND £30million is spent providing transport for thousands of school-children and students in Hampshire but this could change under new proposals.

People living in the area are being asked to give their views on possible reductions in Home to School Transport and the post-16 transport service, which Hampshire County Council says goes 'above and beyond' what is legally required.

If agreed, the changes could become effective from September 1.

The council says some of the services, which are currently used by 15,000 students, are operated at its discretion.

Councillor Keith Mans, executive lead member for children's services, said: "With the reductions in central Government funding, the county council has had to look very closely at how all of its services operate.

"We would like to know what people think about some proposed changes,

that will bring our services into line with other authorities which now offer only that which is specified in legislation."

A spokesperson added that this applies to under 1,000 young people who the county council has supported through local policy that goes beyond the statutory minimum.

HCC is required by law to transport all children of compulsory school age, meaning after the child's fifth birthday, who meet the nationally set distance criteria, who have special

educational needs or disabilities, or whose route to school is an 'unsafe walking route'.

One of the changes could mean that children with special educational needs who are in nursery will no longer be eligible as they are not 'of compulsory school age'.

The consultation on proposals will run until March 13.

A report on the feedback will be prepared for consideration in May.

To have your say, visit [www.hants.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.hants.gov.uk/consultations).

## Renovated Aquadrome makes a splash

YOUNG swimmers and fitness enthusiasts can take advantage of new gym facilities in Basingstoke.

A total of £400,000 has been pumped into a renovation project at the Aquadrome.

A new water play area for toddlers and young swimmers, worth £185,000, was opened this month.

The facility, which includes fish-spouting water jets, has been

named 'Under the Sea - Splash and Play' by six-year-old Rhys Richards from Odiham who won a competition launched locally.

The first phase of a £350,000 upgrade to the gym has also been completed to include new cardio vascular equipment.

The second phase of the upgrade, due to be completed in late January, will include new strength equipment.

The council's cabinet member for communities and community safety Councillor Simon Bound said: "It is important that we invest now so that the Aquadrome continues to be a high quality leisure facility for our residents."

The new features at the Aquadrome have been funded by the Basingstoke & Deane Community Leisure Trust and leisure agency Serco.

Got a story? Call the newsdesk on 01235 516930

### InBrief

#### Hammer threats

A MAN with a hammer threatened staff at South View Stores in Basingstoke.

The man entered the store in Vyne Road with the hammer and threatened a sales assistant, demanding money from the till.

He wasn't given any money, but he stole a cash box before leaving.

The suspect is described as white, about 25 years old, of slim build and was wearing a dark-coloured hoody, light grey tracksuit and dark-coloured shoes.

Police are appealing for information about the incident that took place on January 16 at about 10.25am.

If you can help, call 101.

#### Caught at 145mph

A MOTORIST caught speeding at more than 145mph on the M3 has been banned from driving.

John Hornby, 62, of Ringwood, pleaded guilty to speeding between junctions 7 and 6 on the northbound carriageway near Basingstoke.

The court heard how PC Jamie Foster, spotted the Audi S4 travelling at high speed on June 13 last year.

The average speed initially recorded by the officer was 141.1mph.

Hornby was then pulled over by PC Foster, who was driving an unmarked police car.

Prosecutor Paul Matcham told the court that this was "amongst the highest speeds" that he has prosecuted.

Hornby was sentenced in his absence at Aldershot Magistrates' Court on Monday. He was disqualified from driving for nine months, fined £325 and ordered to pay £85 in costs and a £32 victim surcharge.

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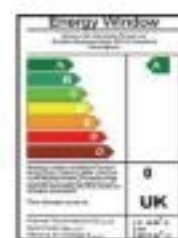
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From left, Ark Cancer Centre Charity trustees Merv Rees and Sandra Fell are presented with the £500,000 match-funding cheque by Ed Gairdner, chief operating officer of The Good Exchange, and Chris Boulton, chief executive officer of Greenham Trust

# Ark moves another step nearer its goal

By Eva Astreimidou

A CANCER charity has hit a £500,000 milestone as part of a major fundraising campaign.

The Ark Cancer Centre charity is a step closer to achieving its goal of £5million towards a new cancer treatment centre.

The welcome boost has come from the Greenham Trust, who pledged to double the generous contributions from supporters of the Ark charity.

The money was doubled via a not-for-profit cloud platform called The Good Exchange.

Chris Boulton, chief executive officer of Greenham Trust, and Ed Gairdner, chief operating officer of The Good Exchange, handed over the cheque to Ark Cancer Centre Charity trustees Merv Rees and Sandra Fell.

Merv, who is also a leading liver cancer consultant surgeon, said:

"This generous match-funding support from Greenham Trust has really been one of the most significant things to have happened in the course of our fundraising for the new centre. We would be nowhere near our current total of £1.8million without it."

He added: "While this is a significant milestone, the project still has a long way to go and we're always looking for new funders and fundraisers to help us reach that £5million target as soon as possible."

Ed Gairdner, chief operating officer of The Good Exchange, said: "[The charity] has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness and positive impact that match-funding has on charitable giving, and we encourage anyone considering supporting the project going forward to take this approach."

The charity is continuing to

encourage fundraisers and donors to give money through The Good Exchange, and is looking for new funders to follow in Greenham Trust's footsteps by providing future match-funding support.

Mr Boulton said: "We know that there is still a long way to go and we look forward to seeing more funders and fundraisers come on board to drive continued project success."

Largely being funded by Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (HHFT), the treatment centre will provide chemotherapy, radiotherapy and complementary treatments.

The majority of HHFT cancer patients have to travel to Southampton or Guildford to receive radiotherapy, but the new centre – which will probably be built on the existing Basingstoke hospital site – will bring this treatment closer to home for more people.

## Village hall targeted twice by thieves

THIEVES struck twice at a community centre with two break-ins over the new year period.

The incidents at the Brookvale Village Hall, in Lower Brook Street, were carried out between December 30 and January 4.

Cathy Williams, treasurer of the village hall said every internal door was smashed, before thieves stole everything down to teaspoons and tablecloths.

The first incident took place between 5pm on December 30 and 8pm on December 31, when thieves caused damage to internal doors.

The second break-in took place between 6.30pm on January 3 and 10am on January 4 where items stolen included a printer, a laminator, a projector and a PA system.

Mrs Williams said: "There are no paid staff. The hall is run by volunteers, now dealing with the damage and disruption."

"Protections have been improved including changing to



high security locks."

More than 30 keys have had to be cut for the trustees and organisations that use the hall.

Thieves ransacked the hall, taking everything from electrical equipment, toddler group toys, retirement fellowship property and even coffee, sugar and biscuits.

They left their crowbar behind, which was tested for DNA.

Since the incidents, the community has rallied round to help – the nearby Tesco Metro replaced the refreshments and Carter Contractors offered to help repair areas of the building.

Police are investigating.

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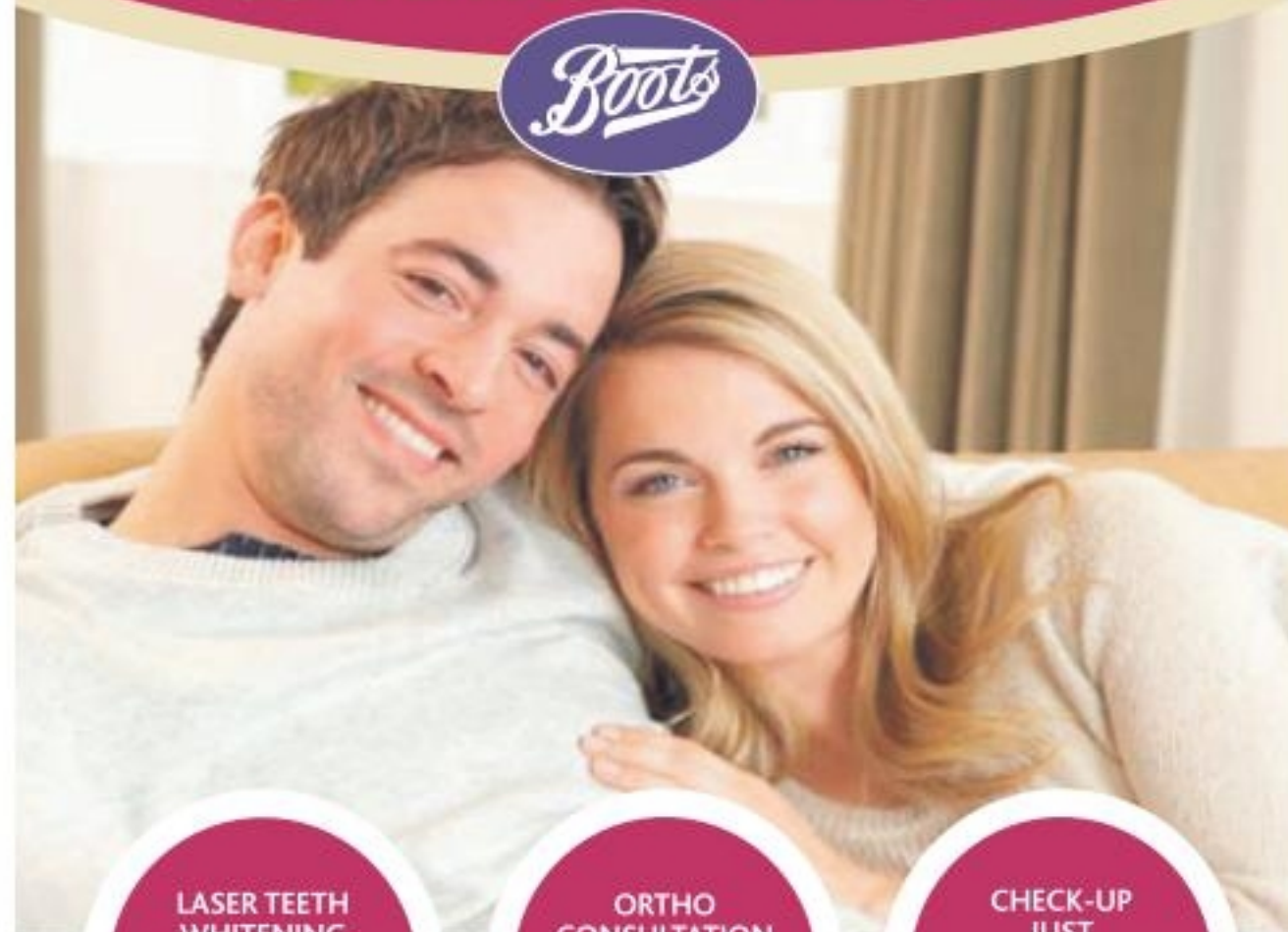
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## Double delight

DANCE crews from Basingstoke wiped the floor with a double win at a national competition.

Junior and senior street dance crews from Happy Feet Dance Academy returned home with a double win at the Britain Does Variety grand finals in Wellingborough earlier this month.

This follows on from their recent success at regional shows in Aldershot in October.

Crew choreographer Mia Stewart said: "Words cannot describe how proud I am of both the crews."

"We are over the moon, taken me a while to come back down to earth after all the excitement."

OMG, the academy's junior street dance crew, were crowned overall champions of the Under 16's competition, beating off competition from 30



acts. They also won £1,000, which they plan to invest in new training gear and future competition costumes.

The academy's senior street dance crew Synergy then went on to secure third place in the Over 16's competi-

tion, out of 32 acts.

They also secured top dance act overall with a piece of choreography themed around puppetry.

Miss Stewart added: "The competition across both age categories



was very strong, however our crew's exceptional high standard secured them their well-deserved wins.

"We are so excited about the future opportunities this success will offer us."

## Investigation launched after rape allegation

AN investigation has been launched following reports a 15-year-old girl was raped in Oakridge.

Detectives in Basingstoke are appealing for information following the incident on Monday at around 8.30pm.

It is reported to have taken place in woodland that runs from Stratfield Road to the footbridge over Ringway North and into Popley.

The girl said she was walking alone when she was approached by an unknown man on a mountain bike who grabbed her and raped her. The girl then made her way home.

The man has been described as white, of large build, aged 30 to 40yrs old, with a full short, styled beard and speaking with an Eastern European accent.

He was said to be wearing a dark green woolly hat, a blue rain jacket, black tracksuit bottoms and work boots.

Detective Inspector Penny Murray said: "The woodland lies behind the Tesco Express store in Oakridge Road, so it is likely there will have been people nearby."

"Understandably the victim is distressed and is currently being supported by specialist officers."

"Incidents such as this are rare. We have increased police patrols in the area to provide reassurance in the community."

If you can help, call 101.

# Tax rise proposal for extra policing

By Eva Astreinidou

HOUSEHOLDS in Hampshire could pay an additional £12 per year in council tax to help the police deal with extra pressures.

Police and crime commissioner Michael Lane will be putting forth his proposal on the average increase, in a meeting tomorrow.

He will present his ideas on how the extra funds can help make Hampshire Police more effective in dealing with 'changed criminal activities' to the Police and Crime panel.

He said: "Our communities are very supportive of our police force and as such are willing to contribute a greater amount."

"This helps us to respond to the continuing pressures from demand and changed criminal activities, enabling the constabulary to continue to be modern and operationally effective and to keep us all safer from the greatest threats and risks of harm."

He said that following a public consultation and guidance from the Chief Constable, he will be putting forward his proposal for an increase of £1 per

month for a Band D household.

He added: "With 61 per cent of council tax payers in the Hampshire policing area residing in properties that are Band A-C the majority of people will see an increase of less than this."

While council tax accounts for one third of Hampshire police's funding, the other two thirds come from national government grant.

The police commissioner added: "To keep us all safer in times of financial constraint is challenging, particularly when facing increasing and changing

demand. The Government's decision in December to provide the same amount of money for policing in 2018/19 as it did last year and to allow greater contribution from council tax payers, was welcome recognition of this. But it is not the end of the journey."

"Funding continues to be under enormous pressure [but] be in no doubt that I will ensure that effectiveness is not compromised in pursuit of efficiency."

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## School expansion plan praised by MP on visit

By Eva Astreinidou

AN MP visited different facilities in Basingstoke to hear all about developments in schools and a programme for end of life care.

First in a series of visits, Maria Miller joined staff at Winklebury infant and junior schools to meet members of the school council, who gave her a tour of the infants.

The MP then paid a visit to King's Furlong Infant School, where she met staff and heard about plans for an extension to the school.

She said: "It was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet many of the children and staff. The children [also] had some great questions for me."

"I was also pleased to hear the plans for the extension at the school. More investment is being made in Basingstoke schools than ever before, with more than £5million being invested in the new buildings at King's Furlong Infant and Junior Schools."

Mrs Miller also visited a specialist nurse at St Michael's Hospice, to hear about the North Hampshire Six Steps end of life care education programme.

Sue Martin, the specialist nurse, delivers the programme which supports care homes in building skills in managing end of life care and enabling residents to die in their home rather than being admitted to hospital.

Mrs Miller said: "The Six Steps programme is incredibly important in helping to ensure that elderly care home residents who



Youngsters at King's Furlong Infants and Winklebury Junior schools gave Maria Miller a grilling on her visits



are approaching the end of life are not admitted to hospital where this is inappropriate and are able to spend their last days peacefully in their home."

Seventeen care homes in North Hampshire are now accredited

with the programme.

She added: "From what I have heard the programme has been very successful in reducing admissions to hospital and improving the care of the dying in local care homes."

## Tackling domestic abuse together

A NETWORKING group has been set up in Basingstoke to ensure people affected by domestic abuse receive support as soon as possible.

The North East Hampshire domestic abuse forum, which met for the first time recently, is made up of 19 representatives from a range of agencies, including the police, housing, domestic abuse services, Citizens Advice and health.

Their aim is to improve performance in tackling domestic abuse,

to make sure those affected can access the most appropriate services.

Cllr Simon Bound, cabinet member for community safety at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council said: "In 2016/17 there were over 2,500 incidents of domestic abuse reported to the police from the Basingstoke area."

"Forming a network of agencies will benefit everyone as it will help to ensure that victims, perpetrators and children and young people affected by domestic abuse

received a joined-up response, regardless of which agency they initially approach."

Support for domestic abuse victims and children in the Basingstoke area is provided by the You Trust.

Self-referrals from men, women and those in same-sex relationships are welcome, in addition to agency referrals.

Agencies that would like to be involved with the forum, are urged to contact [karen.evans@communitysafetnh.org](mailto:karen.evans@communitysafetnh.org).

### InBrief

#### Skills courses

CHILDREN and young people can now take part in courses to pick up skills not taught in schools.

The 12-week programme at Métier Academy runs between 11am and 1pm every Saturday from February 3.

The focus of the course is to help students cultivate skills that will set them apart in the competitive career and business markets, with topics such as financial education.

The course is at Beechdown Members Club in Basingstoke

and is suitable for ages 10 to 18.

For more information, visit [www.themetieracademy.com](http://www.themetieracademy.com).

#### Muddy fun for kids

GET muddy for a good cause this summer as the town has been chosen to host Cancer Research UK's Race for Life Pretty Muddy Kids for the first time.

Down Grange sports complex will host the obstacle course designed just for children - with added mud, thrills and spills on June 16.

From scramble nets and space

hoppers to mud chutes and muddy pools, children will face a range of fun obstacles to crawl under, clamber over and charge through.

The entry fee is £10.

The event is open to boys and girls aged from five to 12 years old and all children must be accompanied by a supervising adult, who will have free entry to the event.

Women from Basingstoke are also being offered 30 per cent off entry fees for Race for Life 5k, 10k, half marathon and hike events until the end of this month.

To enter visit [raceforlife.org](http://raceforlife.org) or call 0300 123 0770.





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Peter Green is a popular place for a coffee and lunch and you should look out for our, new Commercial Department, local artist events, networking nights, indoor market and outdoor sales in a marquee.

Peter Green has won three awards this year for its innovation and work in the community, but underneath it all it is still the same Peter Green we love...

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# Care scheme to cut pressure on hospital wards

By Eva Astreinidou

A NEW service hopes to tackle the issue of unnecessary admissions and overcrowding in hospitals.

Basingstoke and North Hampshire hospital is experiencing major issues with admissions of elderly and vulnerable people who don't have a support network and come in with illnesses brought about by the cold weather.

Care provider Bluebird Care and the NHS North Hampshire CCG have launched a new JET service, designed to help keep these types of people out of hospital by putting emergency care in place in the community where patients would otherwise be admitted to hospital.

The initiative has so far been launched to cover Kingsclere and Tadley Medical Practice, Oakley & Overton partnership, Clift Surgery, Rooksdown practice, Bermuda & Marlowe practice, and Chineham medical practice.

Phil Miles, managing director of Bluebird Care Hook & Kingsclere, said the service will provide instant care to elderly and vulnerable people in the area while relieving the bed blocking

pressure that currently exists.

He said: "The service will reduce admissions for these hospitals which will mean there are more free beds and staff on hand to help those that really need it, leaving us as the home care experts to look after those with less serious issues in their own home."

The service also aims to create new jobs, by establishing a group of health care professionals who can deliver the same level of care in a patient's own home.

Mr Miles added: "At the same time, by offering great new opportunities for progression to our current staff, we are attracting new people to the industry to fill the vacancies in our home care teams by offering attractive salaried contracts and a chance for development and exciting future career options."

Director at Mid-Hampshire Healthcare, Philip Heiden said: "It has long been known that with correct community social care support, thousands of people that are unnecessarily admitted to hospital can be cared for just as well, if not better, in their own homes and Bluebird Care were the perfect partner to deliver this."



## Peter praises slimmers

SINGER and TV presenter Peter Andre congratulated two Slimming World consultants from Basingstoke on helping slimmers change their lives.

Jillian McKay and Sharon Morgan celebrated a record year by receiving recognition for their work at a ceremony in Birmingham.

The pair even got to meet the Mysterious Girl singer, who co-hosted the annual Slimming World awards alongside the organisation's founder and chair Margaret Miles-Bramwell OBE.

Jillian, who runs a Slimming World group at Ambrose Allen Centre, Tadley every Friday, said: "Cuddling up to Peter was a real treat. He was bowled over by the difference Slimming

World makes to people's lives and it reminded me what an important and privileged role I have as a consultant."

Sharon, who runs a group in Calcot every Monday, added: "I truly believe that joining a Slimming World group is the best way for people to lose weight and improve their lifestyle. I'd love for anyone who's thinking about losing weight this January to join us."

Peter said he was thrilled to meet Jillian and Sharon at the event, adding: "I met so many incredible people who had lost amazing amounts of weight and transformed themselves."

"So there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that Slimming World and people like Jillian and Sharon are very special."

## InBrief

### Run through shops

A QUIRKY race that takes runners through a shopping centre will return to Basingstoke this May.

The Croudace Homes Festival 5k run on May 13 is open to runners over the age of 13.

Runners of all fitness levels are invited to join the race which takes participants around Festival Place, through Top of the Town, Eastrop Park and Basing View.

Entry is £12, with the price rising to £15 on April 1. Numbers are limited so runners are encouraged to register early.

To enter, visit [www.destination-basingstoke.co.uk](http://www.destination-basingstoke.co.uk).

### Dignity in care

A CARE home in Basingstoke is hosting an event next Thursday to embrace Dignity Action Day.

The event at Basingfield Court on Huish Lane will be open to residents and staff, and will feature music and a high tea from 3.30pm to 4.30pm.

Dignity Action Day is an annual opportunity for care professionals and members of the public to highlight the importance of upholding people's right to dignity in care services.

### Got a bright child?

CHILD geniuses aged 8-12 from Basingstoke are invited to a Mensa-backed open day in London on Saturday ahead of the next series of Channel 4's Child Genius. To apply contact [child.genius@walltowall.co.uk](mailto:child.genius@walltowall.co.uk).

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# PROPERTYWEEKLY

## Busy start to 2018 with 9% surge in property searches

The property market is enjoying a busy start to 2018, with visits to leading portal Rightmove up by nine per cent in January compared with the same month last year.

An average of more than four million visits have been made to the website each day so far this month.

As well as a surge in the number of people searching for properties, average prices are also on the up. Rightmove has reported a 0.7 per cent increase in the typical price of a property coming to the market in comparison with January 2017.

Antony Gibson, Managing Director of Residential Sales says: "The early signs for the property market in 2018 are extremely positive, with online searches up and asking prices continuing to rise. The combination of these factors makes it the perfect time to get your

By Romans Group

home on the market.

"However, it is worth noting that properties are currently taking slightly longer to sell than this time last year, indicating buyers are happy to wait for the perfect home. As such, sellers should choose a reputable estate agents that can market their property effectively, present it at its very best for viewings and ultimately agree a quicker sale at a great price.

"Overall, our own figures back up those from Rightmove; demand is high, more people are registering with our branches and property values in all areas remain strong."

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For further information contact Brenda Sampson 07786 294574  
[www.littlestepsmontessori.co.uk](http://www.littlestepsmontessori.co.uk)



The Basingstoke Observer has regular Features throughout the year.

Book your space now for the Valentines Feature.

To find out which future Features are planned please contact Debbie on

**01256 952180**

[debbie@basingstokeobserver.co.uk](mailto:debbie@basingstokeobserver.co.uk)

## Basingstoke College of Technology shortlisted for national award

BASINGSTOKE College of Technology (BCoT) has had the quality of its use of technology in the classroom acknowledged by being shortlisted for a prestigious award by the Times Educational Supplement in its annual awards for 2017.

BCoT is one of eight colleges nationally to be nominated for the award of "Outstanding use of technology for improving teaching, learning and assessment" in these esteemed awards which acknowledge outstanding achievements in Further Education.

Principal, Anthony Bravo, feels that a college

of technology should be championing the use of technology to constantly improve the learning experience for students. He said: "We have found that embracing emerging technologies has many benefits – from widening participation and engagement with all learners to giving tutors additional means to monitor a student's progress."

Discover everything BCoT has to offer at its upcoming Open Evening on Monday 29 January from 4.30pm to 7pm. For more information please go to [www.bcot.ac.uk](http://www.bcot.ac.uk).



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# Welcome to the House of Fun

*Madness frontman Suggs is bringing his new show What A King Cnut to The Anvil next month following on from the popularity of his first tour My Life Story. See inside for more*



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# ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE

## Hey you, don't watch that, watch this...

By Josh Cox

MUSIC legend and comedian Suggs McPherson is to bring his new show, *What A King Cnut to The Anvil* on Wednesday 7 February at 7.30pm.

Known for being the lead singer of the popular SKA band Madness, due to huge popular demand after his first tour *My Life Story*, Suggs is back on the road again.

His first show was the story about how he rose to fame. Following on chronologically, *What A King Cnut* is paved to be the surprises that awaited him when he did.

It's safe to say McPherson's career in entertaining has been hugely varied over the years.

Vertigo on the roof of Buckingham Palace. Nearly blowing the closing ceremony of the Olympics. Watching his underpants fall to Earth on Bowie's driveway. Things have gone a little surreal since the Madness frontman was a 12-year-old in shorts on the tough streets of North London.

With many strings to his bow, McPherson has published books, been a radio presenter for the BBC working with the likes of Bob Monkhouse and Phil Cornwell, and



appeared in a number of films and television programmes including *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, *The Tall Guy*, *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* and *Don't Go Breaking My Heart*.

Fame is a tightrope and Suggs has fallen off many times. But, for all the near death experiences, he takes great solace in holding on.

Tickets for Suggs are £30.50 (includes £2 booking fee). For more information or for tickets, call the Anvil Arts box office on 01256 844244, or visit [anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk).

## On stage



### Classic good v evil

The timeless classic *Swan Lake* is coming to The Anvil on Saturday 3 February at 2.30pm and 7.30pm.

Performed by The Russian State Ballet & Orchestra of Siberia, one of the greatest romantic ballets of all time is brought to life by Tchaikovsky's haunting and unforgettable score.

Tickets range from £34 to £41.50.

### The 70's show

Coming to The Haymarket on Saturday 3 February is *The SuperSonic 70s Show* at 7.30pm.

This 70s extravaganza armed with denim, satin, platform boots and a million sequins will feature a six-piece band comprised of former 70s stars.

Tickets cost £20.

### Southern warmth

Red Tail Ring will be delivering a night of folk at The Forge on Saturday 3 February at 7.45pm.

This pair had already earned 'one to watch' status in the USA and gathered a bunch of excellent reviews long before the UK got to learn about their pedigree status.

Full price tickets are £15.

# THE SIMON GARFUNKEL STORY

Wed 31 Jan, The Anvil  
01256 844244 | [anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk)





# ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE

## Ganging up for a great show

By Josh Cox

THE much-anticipated Basingstoke Gang Show is set to open at The Haymarket featuring 68 youngsters ready to entertain.

This will be the 26th instalment of the showcase of creative talent displayed by Cubs, Scouts, Guides, Explorers and young leaders from the community.

Together, they will sing, dance and perform comedy sketches in this bi-annual production.

The Basingstoke Gang Show is recognised as the best-selling and longest running family variety show in the region, and hosts a widely talented cast.

Audiences can expect around a dozen performances including Going Back to School, Taking a Trip to London, Visiting a Department Store and Getting Truly Inspired.

The 'gang' have performed to thousands of spectators over the years and, in 2007, received the honour of performing at The O2, celebrating 100 years of the Scout Association. They also had the pleasure of performing in a gala show Into The Spotlight at the Royal Albert Hall in 1999.



The Basingstoke Gang Show will be raising money to help local charity Muffin's Dream Foundation. It also gives the cast the opportunity to reach their full potential as they develop self-confidence, teamwork and trust.

Tickets for the Basingstoke Gang Show which runs from February 8 to 17 are £19; with concession, under 16 and student tickets costing £13.

For more information or to book tickets, call the Anvil Arts box office

on 01256 844244, or visit [anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk).

There will be a relaxed performance taking place on Monday February 12 at 7.15pm for those on the autistic spectrum and with other disabilities.

### On stage

#### Spice Up Your Life

An evening of girl power can be had as a Spice Girls tribute act will perform at The Academy in Basingstoke on Saturday February 3.

They will play hits from the 90s and 00s with a DJ playing afterwards till 2am.

The doors open from 7pm. Tickets are £10 in advance or £12 on the door.

#### Sweet sounds

60s, 70s and 80s covers band Free Peace Sweet will be playing a free gig at The Wheatsheaf in Alton on Saturday February 3.

The three piece band will be bringing the best of classic rock, pop and punk to the pub.

#### Twist in the story

After last year's sell-out show, Sherfield School are back with Oliver! at The Haymarket on Wednesday January 31 and Thursday February 1.

In an era of inequality and poverty, orphan Oliver Twist is on the run on the streets of London. Taken under the wing of street urchin The Artful Dodger and the criminal mastermind Fagin, the boy is taught to pick a pocket or two.

Tickets are £10.

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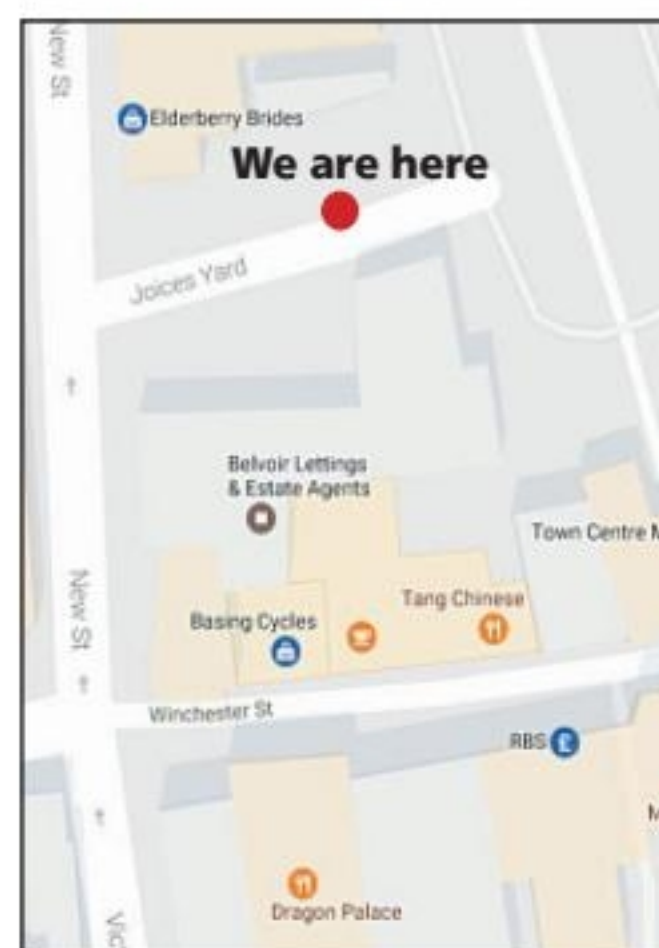
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# Competition

## WIN tickets to La Traviata at The Anvil!

Opera & Ballet International proudly presents an Ellen Kent production of Verdi's *La Traviata* at The Anvil on Sunday 11 February.

The magnificent production stars the international sopranos Alyona Kistenyova\* and Maria HeeJung Kim\*, with highly-praised chorus and full orchestra, and is a tragic tale of full of drama, searing passion and memorable music.

Based on a true story that gripped Paris, *La Traviata* tells of the passionate loves and life of the consumptive courtesan, Violetta.

There are many echoes of Verdi's own life in the opera and he threw himself into the music. The score is full of fantastic tunes and highlights include the Brindisi, the best known drinking song in opera, the duet Un Di Felice and Violetta's haunting aria Addio Del Passato.

This magnificent new production for 2018 boasts sumptuous sets and

**Closing date:** Sunday, February 4

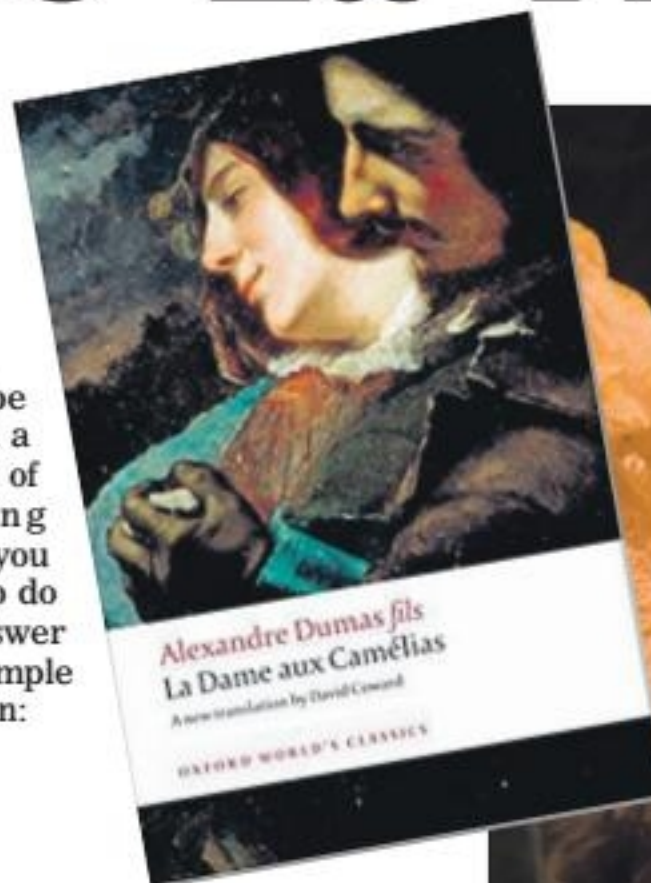
costumes, and is sung in Italian with English surtitles.

Tickets: £38, £34, £30; Over 65s £2 off, under 16s and f/t students £20, £18, £16 (includes £2 booking fee).

Call the box office on 01256 844244 or visit [anvilarts.org.uk](http://anvilarts.org.uk).

\*Cast subject to change

To be in with a chance of winning all you have to do is answer this simple question:



**Win tickets!**

We have two fantastic prizes for this spectacular evening out. Two readers will get a pair of tickets and a copy of "*La Dame aux Camélias*" by Alexandre Dumas, on which *La Traviata* is based.

**Q:** In which city is *La Traviata* set?

To enter this competition and more like it, go online to [www.basingstokeobserver.co.uk](http://www.basingstokeobserver.co.uk)

For full terms & conditions go to [www.observergroup.co.uk/about-us](http://www.observergroup.co.uk/about-us)



## WIN Classic tickets!

THE UK's premier classic car show returns to ExCeL London this winter from Thursday 15 to Sunday 18 February where 40,000 classic car enthusiasts are expected to flood through its doors.

Tickets are on sale now from [thelondonclassiccarshow.co.uk](http://thelondonclassiccarshow.co.uk), with prices starting from just £20.

The London Classic Car Show, now in its fourth year, is the must attend event for all classic car enthusiasts, celebrating the very best of automotive culture and nostalgia. Visitors will be able to experience over 700 classic cars at the show including some of the most legendary 'Getaway cars' from automotive history, used by some of popular culture's most infamous criminals, in one of the show's most hotly anticipated feature areas to date.

The Grand Avenue will make a return this year, paying homage to 'Specials', the limited editions, one-offs and prototypes of unique street and competition cars renowned for their rarity, curiosity and desirability. Visitors will witness some of the world's most genre defining cars cruise down Grand Avenue in a spectacle like no other.

The show will also celebrate the work and career of an unsung hero of

**Closing date:** Thursday, February 8

British motor racing with the presentation of the Icon Award, marvelling at their triumphs and achievements through the years. This year's icon remains a closely guarded secret and will be announced in the coming weeks.

Teeming with excitement, thrill and inspiration, this unmissable show promises a brilliant day out for the whole family.

**WIN TICKETS!**

We have ten pairs of Sunday tickets for this fantastic show and to be in with a chance of winning all you have to do is answer this simple question:

**Q:** One of this year's features is Get Away Cars. What classic motor was used as get away cars in the 1969 film "The Italian Job"?

**THE LONDON CLASSIC CAR SHOW** | 15 - 18 FEB 2018  
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To enter this competition and more like it, go online to [www.basingstokeobserver.co.uk](http://www.basingstokeobserver.co.uk)

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# Competition



# AutoWeekly

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## Make the right decision with 5-star car

By Tony Yates

WHEN you start looking around for a new car, you will probably spend around 10-20 hours of your life searching on the internet for all the reviews on what's hot to buy and what's not.

And it doesn't stop there either, as your friends will probably tell you that their car is the best ever and you should go out straight away and buy the same.

Well, I'm here to tell you that you need to ignore everything your friends tell you and probably what I tell you too. So, let me explain in simple terms why I believe this to be true.

You buy a car based on the look, feel and more importantly the cost. Of course, the salesman will tell you everything you want to know about the car in question, but none of that matters in the end.

What really does matter is how you feel when you sit inside for the first time. Only then will you know if you have made the right decision.

The End!

### Power & efficiency

The Mazda3 comes with a range of engines available - which means you have a choice between both the 165PS petrol engine and the 120PS petrol engine (which was fitted to my test car). Both of these SKYACTIV-G petrol engines deliver excellent fuel economy and performance. Or, if diesel is your thing, then there is the equally impressive SKYACTIV-D diesel range available such as a 105PS or 150PS.

The 120PS petrol engine managed 55.4mpg on the combined cycle; whilst 0 to 62 arrived in around 8.9 sec. Flat out the Mazda3 will reach a top speed of 121 mph, plus a max torque figure of 210Nm. On the road, the engine feels willing and more than powerful enough to keep even the keenest driver happy. The 6-speed gearbox is also light and slick, which actually helps you progress quickly with minimal fuss.

### On the road

I like the way the Mazda3 handles and also how well balanced it feels.



Plus, when the road gets twisty, it's more than capable of holding its own into the corners. The steering also feels light and agile - and you get enormous feedback from the front wheels as to what the road surface is doing underneath you. It's no exaggeration

for me to say that I think the Mazda3 has a lot of manufacturers a little bit worried right about now.

### Safety & technology

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the Mazda3 Sport Nav include; 18" alloy wheels, Adaptive Front-lighting System, Premium Bose® Center-point® surround-sound system with nine speakers, digital speedometer, LED headlights with LED daytime running lights, LED signature rear lights, Colour Active Driving Display, front parking sensors, reversing camera and smart keyless entry.

Plus; rain-sensing front wipers, dusk-sensing headlights, cruise control, adjustable speed limiter, integrated navigation system with 3-years free European map updates and advanced Smart City Brake Support.

To be honest, there is so much on offer with the Mazda3, that it's hard to find any faults at all. Which is probably why I didn't find any.

### To Sum Up

Overall the Mazda3 offers an engaging drive with its responsive and economical engine, excellent handling, and impressive ride quality. A well-deserved 5-stars for Mazda.

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Organised by Omega Holidays plc, ABTA V4782. ATOL Protected 6081. Single supplement applies. Subject to availability.  
†We have included the current flight price within the above package price. Should the cost of flights change the package price may vary. The final price will be confirmed to you at time of booking.

To book call **01524 37500**

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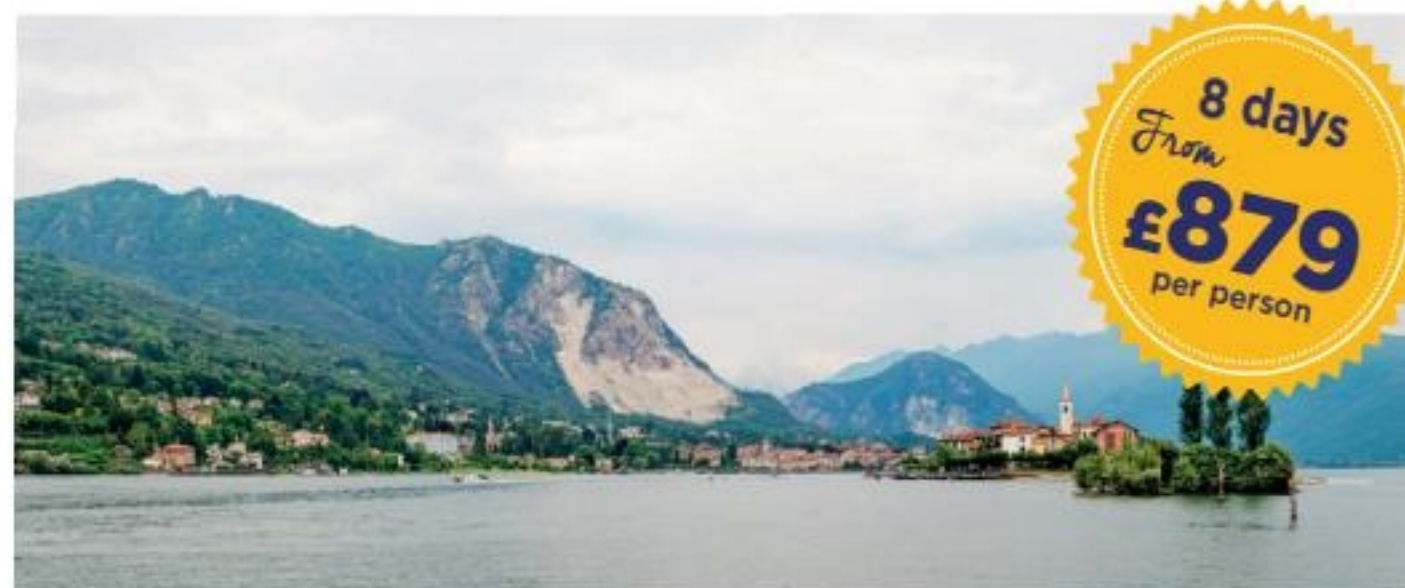


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Quote: **NMD346**

Visit: [www.omega-holidays.com/NMD346](http://www.omega-holidays.com/NMD346)

The advertised price is correct as of 4 September 2017 and is based upon departures from Gatwick airport on 15 April 2018.

Organised by Omega Holidays plc, ABTA V4782. ATOL Protected 6081. Single supplement applies. Subject to availability.  
†We have included the current flight price within the above package price. Should the cost of flights change the package price may vary. The final price will be confirmed to you at time of booking.

To book call **01524 37500**

OPENING TIMES: MON-FRI 8.30-19.00 SAT 8.30-16.00 SUN 10.00-16.00



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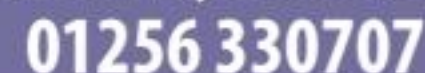
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## Basingstoke Observer

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**SLIM** attractive young female looking for 1-2-1 fun with down to earth male. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429805

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**SUE**, loving fun caring 36yr old tactile female with many likes and interests, looking for tactile, fun male to enjoy loving relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429905

**PIA**, genuine, kind Thai lady. Own restaurant business so very busy. WLTm white gent 30+. I am 43yrs and been living here for 3 years. Text Only. Box: 4178749

**JUNE**, 50s, glamorous green-eyed blonde, loves to spoil her man and be treated to finer things in life, seeks uncomplicated companionship. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429879

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**ANGELA**, 48yrs, seeks no strings casual fun. I have my own house, car and am solvent. I'm busy with a firm figure. You must be open minded, age/status unimportant. Tel: 0906 515 3039 Box: 427633

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**MALE**, 60s, 5ft6, widower, looking for a soul mate and to love again. So if you're looking for someone to love and to be loved, I'm your guy. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429231

**MALE**, age 73, wishes to meet lady for friendship. Age doesn't matter. Likes travel and photography. Text only replies. Mailbox: 5544101

**MALE**, 65, widower, WLTm lady for companionship and LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429265

**IAN**, 65, 5ft6, blue/grey eyes, looking for a LTR with a nice lady of similar age, so please get in touch and call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429841

**ELEGANT** smart Black man, athletic figure, smart, honest, loyal, would love to meet white lady so we can grow old together. Text only replies. Mailbox: 6119496

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**STEVE** is looking for a fun loving loyal lady 52+. Is that you? Text only replies. Mailbox: 6042709

**MALE**, 60s, 5ft6, widower, looking for a soul mate and to love again. So if you're looking for someone to love and to be loved, I'm your guy. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429231

**MALE**, 62, OHOC, 5ft8, slim, WLTm female, age and status not important, for adult fun. Discretion assured. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429239

**MALE**, 65, widower, likes gardening, football, films on TV, WLTm my soul mate, I'm lonely and looking for love. Tel No: 0906 500 3692 Box No: 429129



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## Dragons breathe sigh of relief as funds help maintain players

By George Welch

NEW loan signing Harry Philby has been forced to wait to make his Basingstoke Town debut after Saturday's match at Banbury United was postponed.

The 18-year-old arrived last week from Reading's Under-23 side on a one month loan deal with the option to extend his stay until the end of the season.

The teenage centre back boosts Terry Brown's options in the heart of the defence which had been stretched by the injury suffered by Shane Holamby.

But with Saturday's game at the Banbury Plant Community Stadium called off due to a waterlogged pitch, Philby will hope for better luck this weekend when Town host fifth-placed Tiverton at the Camrose.

Meanwhile, forward Ashleigh Artwell has returned to the 'Stoke fold.

He has signed on a dual registration deal from National League South side Wealdstone, as he looks to get himself match fit.

The additions come after the Dragons confirmed they would maintain the playing squad for next season.

The announcement came after the board met with manager Terry Brown to assess finances and players.

It has since been revealed that following an appeal to raise £20,000 for 'a reasonable squad of players', there has been a 'quick and positive' response to the call for extra funds.

A club statement read: "In the light of the money received, the commitments made and the continuing fundraising initiatives, it was agreed that the current playing squad should be maintained. Any changes would be for football reasons not purely financial ones."

Brown added: "This is great news, but it is not job done, breathe a sigh of relief [sic]."

"Continued fundraising from all sources is essential to support this decision, sustain the club and build for the future."

All money raised goes to the community club. To donate visit [tinyurl.com/y8yxmjt](http://tinyurl.com/y8yxmjt)

■ Town's postponed home match against Stratford Town last Tuesday has been rearranged for Tuesday, February 20 and their game at Banbury has been rearranged for Tuesday, February 6.

Ashleigh Artwell in action for Basingstoke Town earlier this season. Picture: Steve Gridley



### Sport Bites

#### Bufs' sixth defeat

**ICE HOCKEY:** Basingstoke Buffalo's alarming losing run continued on Saturday with a 5-0 hammering at high-flying Solent Devils.

Richard Facey scored a hat-trick and Mark Pitts netted a brace as the home side stroled to victory.

The Bufs have lost their last six matches – their latest win came in November against Swindon Wildcats 2, who they play this weekend.

'Stoke (12th) play Swindon (3rd) on Saturday in their first home game of the season.

#### Tigers' victory roar

**RUGBY:** Tadley Tigers bounced back from successive defeats to beat Didcot 21-6 on Saturday.

The Tigers are up to fifth in the BBO Premier division and travel to Milton Keynes on Saturday.

Chineham made it 10 defeats from 10 in the Snogs Group Hampshire Two division after losing 26-8 at home to Nomads.

Basingstoke extended their losing run in the London 3 South West to 14 with a 62-10 loss at home to Old Cranleighans.

#### Struggle for form

**FOOTBALL:** Whitchurch United are still looking for their first win of the year as they extended their losing run to four with a 2-1 defeat at home to promotion chasing Laverstock & Ford. The defeat leaves them 14th with 20 points from 23 games.

Meanwhile, bad weather caused the postponement of Tadley Calleva's clash at Fawley.

The league leaders will try again when they host second-placed Andover New Street on Saturday. Whitchurch have the weekend off.

#### In search of win

**FOOTBALL:** Basingstoke Town Ladies are hoping a strong away performance at Cheltenham Town Ladies on Sunday will earn them a first win of the season.

Winless 'Stoke are rock bottom with two draws and eight defeats but a win would put them four points behind the hosts, who have also suffered defeat eight times this season.

Town will see the match as a golden opportunity to get some points on the board as they pay a visit to leaders Southampton Saints Girls and Ladies, who have a 100 per cent record, the following week.

## Solid start to year for Rose in Abu Dhabi

**NORTH Hampshire** golfer Justin Rose teed 2018 off to a positive start with a respectable tied-22nd finish at the Abu Dhabi Championship.

The former Tynley Park and Hartley Wintney golf club member swung into action with a steady opening two rounds in the Gulf state of United Arab Emirates.

Rounds of one-under par on Thursday and Friday meant Rose made the cut by a single shot. But the 37-year-old was just warming up.

Five birdies – four of which were on

the back nine – in round three pushed the 11-time European Tour winner up the leaderboard.

Heading into the final day in 30th place on seven-under par – 10 shots off leader Ross Fisher – Rose knew he was out of the running.

But a solid final round of three-under par pushed him even further up the field to secure a tied-22nd finish on 10-under par.

Rose ended last year with a flurry of wins and high finishes and, after going 45 holes without dropping a shot in the

UAE, it looks as if the 2013 US Open winner is raring to go this season.

Fellow Englishman Tommy Fleetwood won the Abu Dhabi Championship with a score of 22-under par, two shots clear of round three leader Fisher and 12 ahead of Rose.

Speaking after the tournament Rose said he was 'just as excited' as golf fans for the return of Tiger Woods at today's Farmers Insurance Open.

Rose was scheduled to tee off in Torrey Pines, San Diego at 6.50am local time, 2.50pm GMT.



## Narrow home defeat ends Row's winning run leaving them just outside play-offs

**HARTLEY Wintney's** three match winning run came to an end with a narrow 1-0 loss at home to second-placed Beaconsfield Town on Tuesday.

The Evo-Stik South East side could have edged back into the play-offs with

a win but remain three points adrift in eighth place after just their second home defeat of the season.

Red-hot Beaconsfield, who have now won five in a row, grabbed the win with a first half Alexander Cath-

line strike proving the difference in a tight contest. The Rams are now level on points with top of the table AFC Rushden & Diamonds.

Hartley's game at home to Thame United (12th) on Saturday was post-

poned due to a waterlogged pitch.

They play away at the south Oxfordshire side on Tuesday but a date is yet to be set for the rearranged home fixture. Before that the Row face a trip to Barton Rovers (21st) on Saturday.

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Inside: Familiar face returns for 'Stoke | Rose tees off 2018 season | Row just outside play-offs after winning run comes to an end

# Crunch time for Bison after Wildcats get their own back

## First defeat of 2018 for highfliers

By George Welch

HIGH-FLYING Basingstoke Bison lost ground at the top of the table after losing their first game of 2018.

'The Herd beat Swindon Wildcats in a thrilling 2-1 penalty shoot-out home victory on Saturday but lost 4-2 in the reverse fixture a day later.

Closest rivals Peterborough Phantoms eased past Milton Keynes Thunder and Invicta Dynamos over the weekend to earn a two-point advantage over Bison at the top of South2, although Doug Sheppard's side have a game in hand.

The Wildcats are also going well in the league and took the lead on Saturday via a 15th minute Edgars Bebris strike.

But Bison made a perfect start to the weekend as Ryan Sutton levelled the scores in the second session before the hosts won it in a penalty shootout.

With home advantage switching to the Wildcats the following day the Swindon side were able to get their own back.

As in the first game, Swindon took the lead on their first powerplay of the evening, with Chris Jones the scorer on four minutes.

The Herd hit back through Davies

four minutes later but that's as good as it got for 'Stoke.

Luc Johnson (33 minutes) and Aaron Nell (34) hit a quick-fire double to make it 3-1 to Swindon midway through the second period.

Stuart Mogg scored a consolation for Basingstoke on 40 minutes but Phillip Hill rounded off Swindon's seventh win in nine matches with a goal in the final few minutes.

Captain Aaron Connolly said Bison made too many mistakes in Sunday's loss.

He said: "We knew coming into the weekend that both games would be tight and we would have to be at our best to come out with a result.

"Saturday night we did just that and took it to Swindon all night, we had our chances to take the game in regulation but it wasn't to be and this one went to the wire.

"Sunday night was a tough one to swallow, we were in the game all night but hockey is a game of mistakes and we made a few which they capitalised on."

Bison are next in action this on Friday against Hull Pirates in the opening leg of the Autumn Cup semi-final. They return to league action on Saturday when they travel to London Raiders.



**CRUNCH:** Bison skipper Aaron Connolly gets up close and personal with Swindon Wildcats opposition  
Picture: grantkingphotography.com

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